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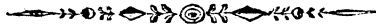
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It is said, that just after the total darkness at Quebec, “a large ball of fire fell into the river, near a large ship, which was seen by many: It caused an uncommon agitation in the water.”

W. HEATH.



XVI. *Observations on Trees, as Conductors of Lightning.* By  
Mr. HUGH MAXWELL.

*Heath, June 21st, 1787.*

SIR,

I HAVE no manner of doubt, but that your Society will very readily attend to every kind of information that is designed to propagate useful knowledge; and as freely to answer every honest inquiry, although from ever so obscure a quarter. And I hold it a duty incumbent on every person to offer such communications; and to make such inquiries as may tend to serve the publick.

I have observed, that the lightning often strikes the Elm, the Chestnut, every species of the Oak, and Pine, and sometimes the Ash, with many other sorts of trees: but I cannot recollect, that I have ever seen the Beech, the Birch, or the Maple, struck by lightning. I have made inquiry among the small circle of my acquaintance; and I cannot find, that any person has ever observed the effect of the lightning on these sort of trees. Now, sir, if this is really the case, that the lightning does not touch the Beech, the Birch, or the Maple (as I think it to be) then the question will arise

rife in my mind, whence the reason of it? Is it from the shape and form of the tree? Or, is it in the nature and quality of that sort of wood, to resist that which has been judged by many to be irresistible? Or, do those trees conduct the lightning, without any injury to themselves? If it should appear, that those trees are not liable to the stroke of lightning, and the reasons appear, why they are not, then perhaps, it may be of service to erect our buildings in whole, or in part, with these sorts of timber. But I must leave the improvement of the hint to the gentlemen of your Society for propagating useful knowledge. And if the same or similar observations have been made by others, I have this consolation, that my intent in this is to serve my country, which fully rewards

your most obedient,

and very humble servant,

HUGH MAXWELL.

*His Excellency* JAMES BOWDOIN, Esq. F. A. A.



XVII. *Experiments in Electricity*. By Mr. JOHN VINALL.

*Boston, May 23d, 1790.*

SIR,

**I**N making use of my large electrical machine, which is constructed with both a positive, and a negative conductor, the air being humid, and consequently unfavourable for electrical experiments, I made use of a small iron pan with some coals under the machine, in order to qualify the surrounding atmosphere, so as to answer my purpose.

By